

The Library Assistant:

The Official Organ of the Library Assistants' Association.

No. 71.

NOVEMBER, 1903.

Published Monthly

NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING.

The next ordinary meeting of the Association will be held on **Wednesday, November 11th**, at the Patent Office Library, 25 Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, W.C. Through the kind offices of Mr. E. Wyndham Hulme, the Comptroller-General has granted permission to look over the library, the points of interest in which are bound to be many and various.

Members are requested to assemble at **7.30 p.m.** The proceedings will be opened by Mr. Hulme with a paper on "Classification in the Patent Office Library," after which the members will be shown round the library.

NOTE.—At this meeting five vacancies on the London Committee will be filled. Nominations should reach the Hon. Sec. not later than the evening before the meeting.

NORTH-WESTERN BRANCH.

OCTOBER MEETING.

This meeting was arranged to be held in the Central Library, Oldham, on Tuesday, October 20th. Owing, however, to the late arrival of some of the members, there was not sufficient time for Mr. W. H. Berry to read his paper, so the evening was occupied in viewing the library and to hearing a short description of the delivery stations, as worked at Oldham.

A table, giving the various libraries working delivery stations, with the number, location, cost, etc., in connection with each, was shown by the kindness of Mr. J. Duff Brown, Borough Librarian, Finsbury, to whom the branch extend their hearty thanks for the privilege so courteously conferred.

Any subscriptions still owing to the N.W. Branch should be paid before the December meeting to the Treasurer (Mr. Wm. Crompton), Y.M.C.A., 56 Peter Street, Manchester.

NOVEMBER MEETING.

The next meeting will be held at Salford on Wednesday, November 18th, by the kind invitation of Mr. Ben H. Mullen, M.A., Chief Librarian and Curator.

Members and friends please assemble at the Irlam o' th' Height Branch Library at 7 p.m., journeying thither by Swinton Car from Blackfriars Street and Deansgate, or from Victoria Station, Manchester, No. 5 Platform at 6.45 p.m. After a short address by Mr. Mullen and Mr. Hargreaves, Librarian, an inspection of this new branch will be made, and then the party will return to Peel Park at 8 p.m., where, for discussion, the American Library Association's Presidential address, "Some things that are uppermost," by J. K. Hosmer, will be read. This paper will be found in the American Library Journal for July, 1903. After the meeting Mr. Mullen will entertain the visitors to light refreshments.

SIXTH ANNUAL DINNER.

The sixth annual L.A.A. Dinner will be held at **Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, E.C.**, on **Wednesday, November 18th, at 7.30 p.m.** Endeavours have been made to ensure a repeated success on this occasion, and a good musical programme is in course of arrangement. Mr. G. E. Roebuck, Organizing Secretary, appeals to all members to attend, bringing friends with them, and such of the members who are musically inclined and who intend to be present are respectfully requested to send to the Secretary their offers of assistance in the evening's musical programme. Librarians are cordially invited. Morning dress. Tickets, 3s. 6d. each, can be obtained by post from the Secretary, and early application should be made in order that definite guarantee can be given. The Entertainments Committee wish to impress upon juniors and others who have not previously attended the dinners, that these events are purely social and that all members attending will be heartily welcomed.

INAUGURAL MEETING AT STEPNEY.

In spite of the late appearance of the Journal and consequent short notice given, an exceptional number of members and friends gathered to take part in the excellent programme arranged by Mr. Cawthorne on the 7th ultimo. Soon after three o'clock the party were being conducted round certain special portions of His Majesty's Tower by a jovial and portly warder, who apparently had English History, at any rate so far as the Tower was concerned, at his finger-tips. The ordinary sights, such as the Regalia, were not inspected, but the generally reserved portions, *i.e.*, the Dungeon, the Armoury and the St. Peter's Church, were viewed with much interest.

From the Tower, the party wended its way, *via* the Minories, to the Whitechapel Art Gallery, where an instructive exhibition of ships and shipping was seen under guidance of the Director.

The museum was next visited and its aims and working explained by the Curator, Miss Hall. Probably this is one of the most practical and useful museums in existence. From here the party proceeded to Toynbee Hall, and was received in the Drawing Room by Canon Barnett, the Warden. The Canon gave a few warm words of welcome, in the course of which he said: "This place, Toynbee Hall, has been existing now for the last twenty years; it was a sort of college, club, and centre of education. Every man who lived in the house took part in some one or other of the sections of work connected with the Hall. It is the object of all who teach to come into personal contact, as far as possible, with the learner, and it is thought that better results are gained thereby. Librarians are educationalists, and under the new Act they would realise this more and more. He envied the youth of those present for the opportunities they would have as educationalists. All that had been done was not what might have been done, and what remained to be done in the future must be largely accomplished by the librarian. He believed in personally conducted tours in Bookland by librarians. He urged the fostering of humanities which must make men realise that each individual was one of a great association, and not a separate unit to live for himself alone. In conclusion he bid the Library Assistants' Association heartily welcome." Tea was next served in the Lecture Hall, to which fifty members and friends sat down. After tea Mr. Cawthorne, seconded by Mr. Rees, voiced the thanks of the Association to the Canon for his welcome and hospitality. This was acknowledged by the Under-Warden, Mr. Beveridge.

Under the guidance of Mr. Councillor Douglas, one of the residents, the Dining Room, Library, Lawn Tennis Grounds, Men's Apartments and Invalid School were visited and items of interest connected with each were dwelt upon. Finally Mr. Douglas gave a short sketch of the history of the settlement.

Shortly afterwards the party bid adieu to Toynbee Hall, carrying away many pleasant recollections, and proceeded to the St. George's Library, Cable Street. Here several other members joined, and it was a full room that Mr. F. C. Mills, Chairman of the Stepney Libraries Committee presided over. The Chairman addressed a few warm words of welcome, and briefly commented on the success of the Stepney Libraries, which he said was due in no small degree to their excellent Librarian and his staff. Mr. Cawthorne then gave an address on "Recent Adverse Criticism of Municipal Libraries," which, together with the discussion, appears elsewhere in this number.

A vote of thanks to Mr. Cawthorne was moved by Mr. Vellenoweth, seconded by Mr. Thorne, and a similar vote, proposed by Mr. Rees, seconded by Mr. Hatcher, was accorded to the Chairman. This terminated one of the most successful, enjoyable and instructive inaugural meetings ever arranged.

RECENT ADVERSE CRITICISM OF MUNICIPAL LIBRARIES.

BY A. CAWTHORNE (Borough Librarian of Stepney).

Owing to our limited space, Mr. Cawthorne's introductory remarks have, by his consent, been deleted. In his introduction he drew attention to the vital importance of his subject to all who were connected with Public Libraries; suggested that it should not be dealt with in any spirit of alarm or antagonism, but coolly and collectedly, and that the questions involved should be dealt with by Librarians collectively and not individually. He said that we ought to welcome honest outspoken criticism as an indication of public interest, and for the opportunities which it afforded us of "seeing ourselves as others see us," and for the kindly warning which it frequently gives of "the rocks ahead!" He emphasized the point that criticism read in the right light was often very suggestive and helpful. He remarked that he had noticed in particular the absence of an official reply, and that the Library Association had allowed our critics to have it all their own way without protesting.

In his opinion the parent Association should take an active part in the defence of our institutions; and he said that he believed that such criticism would never be dealt with effectively unless the Library Associations recognised and accepted it as part of their work. "They could organize counter-campaigns whenever necessary; collect, verify, and furnish reliable information on Library questions which happened to be in the air at any time; could voice with authority the views of Librarians as a body; and could educate the people on the value of Municipal Libraries, and in many other ways help on and co-ordinate the movement."

* * * * *

The following are the more important questions which Mr. Cawthorne dealt with in his address:—

It is said that "*Municipal Libraries encourage habits of reading for the mere purpose of killing time.*"

Why this argument should be used specifically against our Libraries, I cannot understand. If people choose to kill time, how can we prevent them? We, as free subjects, are at liberty to do as we please, providing we abide by the laws of the land and pay our way.

Should we be justified in condemning our parks, our museums, our art galleries, our churches, our theatres, because they are frequently used for the purpose of killing time? Could we convince any sane person that our streets are failures because thousands daily choose to kill their spare time by walking up and down them? In my opinion, people who can afford to kill time, need no encouragement; and they would kill it whenever they felt so disposed, if public libraries were not in existence.

In days gone by, the working classes killed time in public houses, and at the street corners, to a much greater extent than they do now-a-days; and we read that they largely patronised cock-fights, prize-fights and similar edifying exhibitions.

At the present time the wealthy classes kill time at the Royal Academy and other picture galleries, at the theatres, the clubs, and swell subscription libraries and concerts; by golfing, motoring, boating, fishing, hunting, shooting, etc., whilst their poorer brethren promenade our thoroughfares; visit the free museums and art galleries; listen to the orators and the bands in the parks; patronize the musical halls; attend cricket and football matches, etc.

All these ways of killing time are allowed to pass unquestioned; the only one which is objectionable is the use of the most convenient public library to while away an hour or so. Because most things are

abused are we to condemn them outright? Because loafers abuse the privileges afforded by our public gardens are we to close their gates? Because intolérant, narrow-minded sermons are preached in our churches, chapels and public halls, every Sunday, are we to make a clean sweep of all religious teaching, chapel, church and Christianity? Granted the existence of the "loafer," is it not better that he should spend some portion of his time reading in the public library, where he must at least be clean, well-behaved and sober? Who can say but that the associations and surroundings tend to make him a better citizen? As a matter of fact your genuine loafer does not largely patronize public libraries; their atmosphere is not congenial and there are too many restraining influences.

The loafers one sees in our reading rooms are, sad to say, compulsory loafers. Out-of-work mechanics, city clerks, warehousemen, tradesmen and labourers, glad of an hour or two's shelter and rest, and the opportunity to see, free, the newspapers and other journals in which vacant situations are advertised.

I am inclined to believe that reading for amusement is synonymous to "killing time" in the eyes of our critics.

If a man, woman, boy or girl chooses to relieve their daily round of monotonous toil by turning over the pages of a volume of "Punch," the "Graphic," the "Illustrated London News," or any other picture book in the reading room of the local public library; or by reading the chatty articles and short stories in the weekly journals and monthly magazines; or by borrowing from the library any number of novels for home reading, who shall say them nay? The movement was intended by its promoters no less for the entertainment than for the instruction of the people; and the working classes have every right to take their recreation in the way that suits their taste.

To my mind it is a great gain to get the poorer people to use the libraries for the purpose of relaxation. Who is to say that this is not possibly the first step to their becoming serious readers?

There is a Chinese proverb to the effect "That one cannot open a book without learning something;" therefore, if through the agency of our Municipal Libraries we are enabling and encouraging the working classes to make acquaintance with books, it must prove beneficial in the end; and in providing the facilities our Municipal Libraries are fulfilling one of the objects for which they were undoubtedly established.

Dr. Garnett says:—"I have frequently pointed out that one of the strongest points in favour of libraries is that their influence is incalculable. No one can say that access for one reader to one book in one library may not be the condition of a thought, or an action, or an invention, of exceeding value to humanity."

"We have in the Free Library a most powerful instrument of culture, but one whose actual employment for true culture depends upon the feeling of a highly democratic constituency."

"We have much reason to fear that the ends of true culture are as yet but imperfectly subserved by this powerful instrument, resting this opinion chiefly upon the amount of merely amusing literature in circulation. We know that this is extremely natural, and no subject of reproach to the institutions which must to a considerable degree take their colour from their public; and must above all things avoid the error of their predecessors, the mechanics' institutions, which in too many cases forfeited support and eventually expired of inanition from insisting with too much strictness upon an ideal standard."

The point which I wish to impress on you is this—we have absolutely no power to question anyone's right to use our libraries as they please, nor

to dictate how and what they shall read; and that we should defeat our objects if we were to attempt to do such things. The public are the masters, we are the servants; and we must ever remember this fact, and cater for all classes of the community.

But I feel that the time has arrived when we should do all in our power to encourage the so-called "time-killers" to read systematically, by pointing out to them at every opportunity the error of their ways; and by offering them every inducement to turn their leisure hours to account by reading round subjects just for culture's sake.

Our business must no longer end in providing what the public demands. We must set to work to create a demand for something better than fiction and periodical literature. If we are to refute the argument that libraries are failures, we must pay more attention to the task of educating the public to the proper use of our institutions. Had we done this more thoroughly and consistently in the past such an argument as the one with which I am now dealing could never have been advanced against our libraries.

It seems to me that we must lay ourselves out, more so than ever previously, to take up the work of the Board, and other elementary schools where they leave it. Here is our opportunity to constitute our institutions the true continuation schools for the people.

We must train ourselves to agree to differ on matters of classification, cataloguing, binding, charging methods, and other matters in connection with library management; and learn that they are not considered important by any but ourselves, and do not materially affect the great question of *how to teach the people to read systematically*. We must, I say, agree to differ on such matters, and in unison concentrate our thoughts and energies with the view of attaining in all its fulness the end for which our institutions were primarily established, viz: the higher education of the masses. It is not for me to dogmatise on how this end is to be attained. Circumstances alter cases: what would answer in the East End would probably fail in the West End, and so on. But what we should do is to set to work to arrive at the peculiar wants of our respective districts, think out plans to meet our local circumstances, and work them for all they are worth. We should organise more thoroughly with the purpose of dealing with the problem collectively, in addition to doing our best individually; we should combine, co-operate, agitate, and not rest contented until it is publicly recognised that we are doing our utmost to eradicate the habit of desultory reading.

On all sides we hear that the possibilities of our institutions are, indeed, great. Have we ourselves realised this fact? Have we made up our minds that we will do all in our power to substantiate the faith which so many of our greatest men have publicly stated they have in our worth? Are we endeavouring to fulfil our true functions. Are we approaching the ideal which was set for us by the promoters and supporters of the movement? These are the questions which we must keep ever before us. We must not content ourselves with the mere collection and circulation of books. We must take up more actively than ever our part in the educational scheme of the country, and make ourselves and our libraries a necessary part of its machinery. We must lay ourselves out to get hold of, and to retain, the vast number of young people who have been prepared in our schools for reading, and constitute ourselves their guides to all that is good in our literature, and endeavour to make them systematic readers, and so prevent them lapsing into "time-killers" and becoming a standing reproach to the educational system of the country, and an argument to be used against ourselves.

* * * * *

As regards the complaint "*That our libraries form and confirm the practice of Intellectual Dissipation.*"

All that I have said in respect to the "*killing of time*" applies equally as well to this. But in this case we are in a position to more strongly dispute the point; in fact, to prove that our institutions are effective and active agents in the counteraction of this present day evil.

It is admitted freely that our elementary education system is far from perfect. It does not make thinkers of those who pass through the schools; it is superficial, soulless, and unsuccessful. *Herein is the cause of all the mental dissipation of later years.*

If instead of trying to cram all the known facts of our present day knowledge into the heads of the children whilst they are between the ages of 5 and 15 years (a system which either develops a distaste for learning, or an apathetic overburdened feeling, or a self-satisfied state of mind) the children were taught that they should supplement their teachers' lessons by reading up their subjects at home or at the public library; if a spirit of enquiry were instilled into their minds and the value of books was impressed upon them, and they were taught how to make an intelligent use of the facilities for reading and study which public libraries and similar institutions afford; if they were trained consistently from first to last to understand that their education would really begin when they went out into the business world, that there is no royal road to learning, that a little knowledge is dangerous, that it is the duty of every citizen to equip himself mentally to the very best of his ability, and that all the world's knowledge is accessible to him who can and will use his opportunities to read systematically.

If this were the broad plan of the people's early education there would not be so much reason to bewail mental dissipation. In my opinion our school system has had a "*stunting*" effect on our working classes, because it has led them to believe that, once through the 7th standard, their education is finished, and there is no necessity for further mental effort on their part. My point is this—the schools have set up the standard, they have, so to speak, drawn the line for the working classes, and the people have accepted it literally and totally, the result being that, instead of a desire for knowledge and a love of culture being developed and cultivated, we get a lack of interest in books and an incapacity for continuous or concentrated study of any subject for its own sake. The enormous demand for the boiled down halfpenny newspapers, for the penny weekly journals of the "*Tit-Bits*" order, and for the cheap illustrated monthly magazines, is unmistakable evidence to my mind of the truth of my argument.

Public Libraries cannot be credited with the creation of this demand. It is purely the demand of the people, it suits their tastes, they have but little desire for books, they are too long and take too much reading. The people only feel equal to such ephemeral literature as that of which I have just spoken. Publishers are more responsible than anyone; they have fostered it by the extensive way in which they have pandered to and catered for it.

Speaking at this year's Library Association Conference at Leeds, Mr. James Baker, of Clifton, remarked "*that the public was always willing to pay for what injured it, and had given enormous fortunes to proprietors of newspapers and periodicals of the scrappy, tit-bitty class.*" "*These terrible scourges of tit-bit literature and journalism,*" he said, "*as surely destroy brain power as does the liquor dram, but the prevalence of this matter does not injure the fact that the public library movement has been*

of enormous service to mankind." Mr. Baker went on to say that it was the primary schoolmaster we must get hold of to instil into the children a love of real books and a distaste for these insidious drams.

And the President of the Conference, Professor Dixon, in his opening address said: "If the exigencies of modern life usurped more and more for technical training, then it might be that, save for the privileged few, the library, the free school of the people, would become the best, perhaps the only, school of the humanities, might serve an end not hitherto foreseen, attain an uncomputed power, and fulfil an uncalculated destiny. It might assist the student of the days to come to do for himself what his schools and teachers failed to do—conduct him to higher levels than they, to a sympathetic communion with the hopes and fears, the achievements and ideals of the race. One foresees," he went on, "for the public library a widening horizon, an increasing purpose, since to it alone of all institutions which have the things of mind for their province no limits are prescribed. It cannot, as long as opinions are expressed in books, fall behind the advancing tide of thought, nor lose touch with the requirements of men; it cannot from its very constitution be other than 'the heir of all the ages.' And so it comes that the education given by the library may be regarded as supplementary or even corrective to that which schools and colleges provide. It may even be described as the university of later life, the university one is never too old to enter and is never called upon to leave, which prescribes no rigid order and no hours of study, entertains no prejudices against this subject or in favour of that, imposes no test upon its students, and expresses no discouraging preference for the brilliant over the duller intellects.

"He could hardly suppose that if the library was destined to play so large a part in the future education of the people, they would long rest satisfied while it merely supplied, and did nothing towards the interpretation of books. Friendly co-operation between the library and schools, the library and University Extension Societies, and between the library and the Home Reading Union, seemed inevitable and desirable. He foresaw for the librarian responsibilities hardly yet realised, and a rank and status which the public in its own interest would acknowledge and even force upon him."

Proceeding to speak of the great importance of English literature, and its place in education as an instrument of culture, the President said: "To those who can read the signs of the times it is already clear that if our fellow-countrymen are to participate in the higher life of the mind, if they are to enter at all 'the garden of great intellects,' if they are ever to be attracted into the orbit of some great soul, it must be for the majority through the history and literature of their own people." With librarians, in some measure at least, it lay to make more widely known to English men and women the wealth of their own literature. He did not anticipate unbroken success for them in this department of their work. In no age had the practical man easily been persuaded of the value of ideas; he was at all times difficult to convince that any virtue or profit could emanate from long days spent with books. And yet, little of consequence had ever been accomplished by men who had not possessed a faculty for continuous pondering or a faculty for dreaming. Human history reiterated, with extraordinary emphasis that the visionaries were the practical men."

What more inspiring message could we wish to receive? I commend it particularly to you, who hope to be the librarians of the future. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it, because therein is embodied what the public are learning to expect of us more and more as the years go by. We must respond to the call or lose the respect and support which

the public have given us hitherto, and, mark you, are prepared to ever give us, providing we take ourselves and our calling seriously.

* * * * *

As regards the statement "*That our libraries introduce boys and girls, and half-educated men and women to poems and fictions, which, though not actually immoral, inflame their passions and imaginations, and have a most disturbing and unwholesome effect; and that they place in their way works on religious and moral subjects for the perusal of which they are not ripe.*"

To my mind, this highly coloured argument goes more to prove our critics' ignorance of our libraries than it does to prove them failures. Special sections for children are now common in all our libraries, and the young people are restricted to such sections until they attain the age to exercise their own free-will and judgment. As regards the adult readers, we dare not take up the attitude of censors, nor interfere with the liberty of the public in their choice of reading. The objection is undoubtedly hypothetical in character, and if we emphatically deny its truth as regards the demoralising influence of our libraries our critics cannot reply by bringing evidence to bear; and we should take every opportunity to dispute this most insidious statement by pointing out that not one jot of evidence can be produced to substantiate it. It is now half a century since Carlyle asked why there was not a public library in every county town, and the Sage of Chelsea, with that fine logic which distinguished most of his arguments, pointed out that there was a county gaol and a county gallows, why not a public library? The effect of education upon crime has been a subject much discussed by social reformers, and it is now generally conceded that institutions which present so many opportunities for intellectual improvement as public libraries offer, have a good moral effect on the community.

In connection with the fiction reading objection, I venture to say that if it were possible to compare the reading of Public Library borrowers with that of the wealthier classes and the patrons of the swell subscription libraries, one would find the reading of the former to be of a higher and healthier tone than that of the latter. To my mind Lord Goschen, in his address to the Oxford Conference, spoke sympathetic words of common-sense when dealing with the question of the public libraries; whom were they to cater for? "He had read," he said, "with much interest the analysis of the occupations of the readers in one of their large public libraries in London, and it was interesting to see the vast variety of those readers; they belonged to nearly every class of occupation. As regards works of fiction, one must be fair; a great many of the readers in the public libraries came home wearied from their work and in a frame of mind which it might be difficult for them to apply themselves to some of the more serious books, though if they would only try biographies, histories, and works of that kind, as soon as they had taken the plunge and fairly tackled them, they would prove as great, or of even greater interest than novels which seemed so much lighter reading. There were novels which were heavy reading—many would have had experience of them. There was fiction and fiction, and he would not too readily condemn the libraries or the system of the libraries if statistics showed that a great number of these books were taken out. Besides, he did not know how the statistics worked in that respect. The novel might be returned to the library very much quicker than another book, and if they counted by the number of books that went out, was it a fair test? He had not seen that point put, but he dared say he would be corrected by the librarians if it was not the right test. If one person took out a most useful history book and spent a week over it, that counted one, but if another read two novels

in the same time that counted for two, but at the same time the greater good had been achieved by the former, who, perhaps had spent many hours on the more serious work. He put it as to whether that was quite a fair test to go by the number of books lent. The fairer test, but one that could not be applied, would be the number of hours spent upon the literature these public libraries offered." And Mr. Thomas Greenwood, in his letter to the "Daily News" for December 27th, 1902, said: "For the nimble penny for library purposes there has been during the fifty odd years of their existence a really useful return. Half a century, and less in most cases, is only a short time in which to judge of the result of a new experiment in the mosaic of our national life. Whatever apparent weakness there may be, is, it may be argued, compensated for by the ever-widening vein of solid reading which is issued. Public libraries can mainly justify their existence by their educational utility, and this vitally important section of their work is receiving on all hands the fullest and most absorbing attention.

"Could we arrive at the period when there will be a close-time among the producers of second-rate up to tenth-rate fiction, many librarians would have a happier life than is at present possible under existing conditions. It is the restless output which seems to be at fault. The conduits are ever full, and effective log-rolling makes the keeping up of the supply a foregone certainty. If the newspaper Press would help the libraries and the reading public by a little less prominence being given to the manufacturers of fiction, and devote more attention to the better literature issued, they would confer a definite boon upon the community. Could the beauties of other sections of English literature be advocated with one-half the earnestness devoted to fiction, a different state of things would quickly present itself."

"More must be done both inside and outside the libraries to direct the currents of reading, and none are more keenly alive to this than municipal librarians."

"Looking at library statistics in the aggregate they are not of vital importance. The time will come in the history of these institutions when many of the statistics which now appear in annual reports will be a thing of the past. It may become practicable in returns to divide fiction into two classes, say, Fiction A and Fiction B. The classical and historical fiction of our language should scarcely be grouped with some of the weak and withered stuff now issued, and often issued, it should be remembered, not at the publisher's expense so much as at the cost and risk of the author. No praise could be too great for the best of our British fiction."

I have no hesitation in saying that public libraries are not to blame for the demand for light and sensational fiction. Library Committees cannot dictate to their readers as to what books to read. They have the power to exclude works of an immoral or injurious nature, and do not hesitate to use it; whereas no such control is exercised by the many purveyors of published trash. Personally, I think it far better that the people should get their fiction from public libraries than from the news-agents.

* * * * *

In conclusion, I assume that you look to me for some suggestions. I would point out that my object is not to tell you how to do your work, but to impress you with the seriousness and importance of your calling; and set you thinking about yourselves and the responsibilities which devolve upon you now, and will devolve in increasing extent as you get older.

I endorse the views of the librarian who wrote anonymously in the "Daily Chronicle," about the middle of last September, and commend his

remarks to your serious attention. He said almost every detail of library management is being improved; classification is now more general, cataloguing is fuller and clearer, and descriptive annotations are frequently met with, rules and regulations are more liberally conceived, and, in the libraries where the most advanced methods prevail, the issue of fiction is gradually being reduced by "Students'" extra tickets; special subject lists; popular lectures, and half-hour talks on books; by book exhibitions, special facilities for study in our reading rooms; co-operation with University Extension Centres, and other educational agencies; and by the publication of Bulletins and Library Magazines. All this means that good literary material is becoming more accessible. The whole tendency of modern practice is to get the right books to the right people, but not "to shove immortals down people's throats." And to carry on the work in this spirit authorities now look for librarians who are, mark you, successful administrators rather than merely bookish men.

If asked what reform or improvement they would like to see in the service, most thinking people would reply with Mr. H. G. Wells: Better equipment for serious work. As we said, the present trend of library practice makes for less fiction reading. (1.) If there could be co-operative book selection and guides to books, "clear, explicit bibliographies," as Mr. Wells calls them; (2.) if there were at hand reliable advice (only obtainable by co-operation) as to how to weed out the obsolete and valueless stock now shelved in municipal libraries, and so to make them well-set, active and sinewy; and (3.) if funds permitted the duplication of standard text-books and classics so that it would be next to impossible for a reader to go away without any real good book that he wanted—then we should hear less of the question, "Are Public Libraries failures?"

A reform specially needed in order to begin co-operative work successfully and to improve the *personnel* of the service, is a living centre of librarianship, which would provide a home for the Library Association, the Library Assistants' and kindred Associations; a bureau that would keep in close touch with the Continental and American Library and Bibliographical Societies; and serve as a school for the training and examination of assistants. It would also be comparatively easy to make the centre an office for book selection, co-operative cataloguing, selective bibliography, and an exchange for duplicate books. On the score of economy co-operation must come, especially when appraisal and description of books is more general. To catalogue and pithily describe a book, time and skilled labour is needed, and it is little short of ridiculous for several hundred libraries to deal with that book independently. Moreover, this centre could publish valuable out-of-print works which are not likely to pay the speculative publisher to reprint.

Such a bureau would meet our professional wants. How about the great public? In my opinion they want a "Public Library Readers' Journal," a periodical entirely supported by public libraries in the interests of their readers.

A journal which shall be quite independent of authors, publishers, booksellers, and advertising agents in particular, and therefore free to express a candid, unbiassed opinion on the output of the Press. A journal whose purpose would be to counteract the puffing and booming of trashy books; to act as an antidote to the inspired reviews which are so common at the present time; a journal that would judge books from the standpoint of whether they were fit and proper to be included in our public libraries for wide circulation amongst the people; an unprejudiced journal, whose standard would be sound literary merit and technical worth.

In addition to reviewing books, it would prove an excellent medium for advising the public on courses of reading; for drawing attention to classical and standard literature, as against the mediocre. It would undoubtedly meet a want of the day, and, I think, would prove a valuable ally to Public Librarians. It would certainly tend, to a great extent, to make our libraries of practical educational service to the people.

Plucky efforts are now made locally by many librarians through the agency of library magazines to interest readers in their libraries; but who dare gainsay that a journal such as I suggest would not prove more economical and more effective?

University Extension students have their journal; National Home-Reading Union followers have their journals; Librarians and their assistants have their journals; surely the great society of public library readers requires a journal.

We could co-operate in the production and circulation of such a journal and through its pages do much to educate the people in the true use of our libraries, and to minimize the evil of desultory reading.

Finally, in the words of the anonymous writer previously mentioned, there is no disputing the fact that the public library idea has undergone a radical change. Mr. Gladstone advocated libraries as means of culture, as the "universities" of the poorer classes. The ideal now is wider and more useful. A municipal library, say modern librarians, is primarily a tool, an information bureau, for the use of every kind and class of worker; secondarily, it supplies healthy and choice reading, in the shape of fiction and other literature, for mental relaxation at the end of the working day. Incidentally, it may make scholars and men of culture, but in the main its object is to make better workers, well-informed, brighter, and happier citizens.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. Rees said that he was very pleased with the subject Mr. Cawthorne had chosen, and with the excellent manner it had been put before them. He thought that Associations of Librarians should sometimes answer the attacks made on public libraries in the Press. He read the article referred to in the "Nineteenth Century" a few days after it was published, and thought that it must have been written without a sufficient knowledge of the usefulness and work of municipal libraries, but he had looked in vain in the following issues of the Review for any answer to the charges made.

Mr. Harris called attention to the fact that Mr. Churton Collin's article in the "Nineteenth Century" had been ably replied to in the "Library World," and although it was not official, the reply was effective, excepting that it would have had a wider reading and greater influence had it been published as a reply in the "Nineteenth Century." Mr. Harris also spoke in reference to the education of librarians, declaring that before we could expect better work from them, they must be better educated. He deplored the evident apathy on the part of library assistants to educate themselves, and said it was poor encouragement to the Library Association to provide the excellent classes they have at the School of Economics, when comparatively so little opportunity is taken of them. Considering the number of assistants in London, there should be at least an attendance of 100.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

Aberystwyth.—The corporation have received a letter from Mr. Carnegie offering to provide £3,000 for the erection of a free public library for the town.

Bangor, Rathkeale (co. Limerick), and West Ham.—These places have received gifts of £2,500, £2,000, and £5,000 respectively from Mr. Carnegie.

Cardiff.—Mr. Carnegie has offered £10,000 to the Corporation of Cardiff for the erection of two branch libraries.

Chelmsford.—On Tuesday the town council decided to apply for Local Government Board sanction to a loan of £4,000 for the erection of a public library. The total cost of the building is estimated at £7,800, but subscriptions (including one of £2,500 from Mr. Carnegie) to the amount of £3,800, have been promised.

Hackney.—After an animated debate the Hackney Borough Council rescinded a previous resolution refusing Mr. Carnegie's offer (with conditions) of £25,000 for the establishment of free libraries in the district. A councillor said that Mr. Carnegie's gift had been objected to on the ground that it would conduce to the undue reading of fiction. To combat this idea he quoted figures showing that out of over 3,000,000 books sent out last year from forty-three libraries only half were novels.

Hammersmith.—Modified plans of the central library were submitted to the borough council recently by the architect, Mr. H. T. Hare, and approved. It was resolved that as soon as the quantities and specifications were prepared tenders should be invited.

Hammersmith.—An interesting gift has just been made to the Libraries Committee by a Councillor. It is a weather-vane which for many years was upon an old house in Brook Green, formerly occupied by Mark Lemon. It is now hoped that this relic of the famous editor of "Punch" may be appropriately mounted upon the new library shortly to be erected in Brook Green Road by the generosity of Mr. Carnegie. In the same old house was found three large rapiers, two of which had elegantly chased hilts. These have also been presented to the Libraries Committee, and it is proposed to mount them over the muster roll of the "Loyal Hammersmith Volunteers," which hangs in the hall of the Ravenscourt Park Library.

Hereford.—Mr. James Cockroft, librarian of the Free Library, has issued a list of books which are to form the nucleus of the Herefordshire Fruit-Growers' Association Library, and

which have just been taken over by the Free Library Committee. They were purchased out of the grant of £50 made by the Technical Instruction Committee of the Herefordshire County Council to the Fruit-Growers' Association for the purchase of books on fruit culture, and also mounted specimens of insects, both beneficial and injurious to fruit trees. The latter will be arranged in a table case which the Fruit-Growers' Association provided to be fixed in the Museum. The books will be available for home use to the members of the Association, and will also be open to the general public for reference on the Free Library premises.

Hove.—Mr. Carnegie's promise of £10,000 to build a free library at Hove, conditional on a site being provided, has met with a gratifying response, an anonymous donor having offered a suitable piece of ground for the purpose. The offer is subject to an adjacent plot being taken as a site for a technical institute, at a price stated to be much below its market value.

Lewisham.—At a recent meeting of Lewisham Borough Council a letter was read from Mr. Cameron Corbett, M.P., offering unconditionally the gift of a site for a branch library. The gift was accepted, with thanks.

Malvern.—Mr. Carnegie has approved of a site for a free library, and the district council are to be asked to accept his offer of £5,000 towards the cost of providing the building.

Mexborough.—A site has been secured by the local authority for a free library, towards the erection of which Mr. Carnegie has given £2,000.

Obituary.—We quote the following from a contemporary : "The death is announced of Mr. Charles Ammi Cutter, a distinguished American librarian and bibliographer. He was born at Boston in 1837, and educated at Harvard University. He was for some years librarian of Boston Athenæum, and was the editor of the *American Library Journal*. The last ten years of his life were passed as the librarian of the Forbes Library, Northampton, Massachusetts."

Paddington.—A special meeting of the Borough Council was held to consider the offer of Mr. Carnegie—£15,000—for two free public libraries if the Acts be adopted for the whole of the Borough. The Acts are now in force in the Queen's Park Ward, where they were put into operation prior to the passing of the London Government Act, under which it was transferred from Chelsea to Paddington. Col. Blair moved the adoption of the report recommending adoption of the Acts. At the same

time he said he should vote against it, as he believed free libraries had degenerated into working men's clubs, where people went only to read the newspapers. The motion to adopt the Acts was lost, and Mr. Carnegie was thanked for his offer.

Perth.—Mr. Carnegie has just gifted to Perth the unique and valuable Library of the late Robert Scott Fittis, the great Perth historian and antiquarian. This library contains between 6,000 and 7,000 volumes.

It is to be hoped that other towns and Library authorities will take note of this gift, as, all over the Kingdom, there are many valuable collections of books in the hands of private individuals which might be purchased in a like manner.

Reading.—As a result of accepting Mr. Carnegie's bounty of £8,000 towards a branch library scheme, the Town Council have decided to promote a Bill for increasing the rate by one half-penny.

Society of Public Librarians.—The Annual Meeting of this Society was held at the Bishopsgate Institute on Wednesday evening, October 7th, when the following officers were elected for the ensuing year:—Chairman, Mr. F. E. Chennell (Willesden Green); Vice-Chairman, Mr. W. Bridle (East Ham). The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. H. S. Newland (Harlesden), and the Hon. Secretary, Mr. C. W. F. Goss, were re-elected. The Hon. Treasurer presented his balance-sheet, which showed a satisfactory balance in hand.

Stepney.—The inaugural meeting of the School Nature Study Union was held at the St. George Library on October 27th. This Union is to promote the study of nature among school children, and to work in conjunction with the Libraries' Museum. We understand that the Reading Circles are well under weigh here now.

Stratford-on-Avon.—The town council have accepted a tender of Messrs. Cox & Harris, of Stratford-on-Avon, for the erection of a public library in Henley Street. This building, it will be recollected, was the subject of some controversy—particularly in literary circles—at the beginning of the present year, and has been presented to the town by Mr. Carnegie.

Swansea.—A letter has been received from Mr. Andrew Carnegie offering to grant £8,000 on the usual conditions towards providing five branch libraries for Swansea.

PRIZE ESSAYS RESULT.

The Adjudicator has awarded the Senior Prize for the best essay on "The Planning and Arrangement of a Public Library" to W. J. HARRIS, Stroud Green Branch of the Hornsey Public Libraries.

The Junior Prize for the best essay on "Charging Systems" has been awarded to DOUGLAS ALLAN GILLESPIE, Buckingham Palace Road Library, City of Westminster.

NEW MEMBERS.

Senior.—Mr. J. C. SCOTT, Kendal; Mr. C. WELLS, Hove.

Junior.—Mr. E. J. BELL, Fulham; Mr. H. DIXON, Kendal; Mr. A. J. GLENN, West Ealing; Mr. J. D. Young, Fulham; Mr. G. VALE, St. George, Stepney.

APPOINTMENTS.

PHILIP, Mr. A. J., of Hampstead, has been appointed Librarian of the Gravesend Public Library.

APPOINTMENTS VACANT.

Junior Assistant required, age 16 to 17 years, some experience essential, to take up a position in the Hampstead Branch of Bookshops, Ltd. Salary to commence, £50 per annum. Apply by letter to F. Whelen, Esq., Bookshops, Ltd., 1 Arundel Street, Strand, W.C.

NOTICES.

All matter for December Journal should be sent to the Hon. Editor before November 19th.

All other communications should be addressed to the *Hon. Secretary*, Mr. G. E. Roebuck, PUBLIC LIBRARY, 236, CABLE STREET, E.